

would become a kind of lifeline for a frightened young man in a faraway place with dreams of writing. Reedy read Paterson's book in the place that would be the setting for his first novel. "Bridge to Terabithia" was also the starting point of a friendship between Reedy and Paterson.

"It was amazing," Reedy said the other day by telephone from his home in Spokane, Wash. "I needed that reminder that there was still hope and still beauty in the world. At that time in my life there was none. There was nothing except guns and fear. I was really not at all sure that I was ever going to get out of that place."

"This book gave me a little bit of beauty at that time, and I needed it. Not the way I need a new app for my iPad. I needed it to keep my soul alive."

#### EVERYTHING WAS DIFFERENT

Reedy, 35, was an English major at the University of Iowa when he enlisted in the Iowa Army National Guard. Clinton was president. Reedy never imagined he'd be deployed to fight in a war. He had graduated from college and was working two jobs: substitute teacher and monitoring a security camera at a store.

Ten years ago, on a shift at his security job, Reedy got a phone call from his sergeant.

"Stampede," the commanding officer said, using the code word that signaled the guard soldiers were activated for war, Reedy said.

"With one phone call, everything was different," he said.

After basic training at Fort Hood, Texas, Reedy was sent to western Afghanistan. Paterson's book reached him about six months after the word "stampede" altered his life. The day "Bridge to Terabithia" arrived, Reedy had a rare break from his three-part routine: the unit's mission (providing security for reconstruction efforts), guard duty, sleep. He read the book.

"Bridge to Terabithia" is about two friends—a boy and a girl—who create an imaginary forest world where they play together and share adventures. The world is shattered by an accident: the girl drowns in the river the friends cross by rope swing to get to Terabithia. Paterson wrote the book after her son David's close friend was killed by lightning when the children were eight.

After reading the book, even as he carried his loaded M16 "scanning my sector to make sure there weren't any hostiles in the area," all he could think about was Paterson's novel.

"I thought maybe I can keep going if I remember kids are still having friendships," he said. "And the adventures of growing up."

On Aug. 1, 2004, from Farah City, Afghanistan, Reedy wrote Paterson a letter. He sent it through her publisher—unsure if it would reach her. The letter begins with an apology that he didn't type it. Reedy explains that he is writing from Afghanistan, where he is on a mission "in support of Operation Enduring Freedom."

He thanks Paterson for a book that "mesmerized" him.

"You wrote an absolutely beautiful novel and I, like Jessie Aarons, fell in love with Leslie Burke," Reedy wrote, referring to characters in Paterson's book. "... Maybe it was because she was a spark of beauty in a land and a war where beauty is of so little importance."

In Vermont, where Paterson moved with her family 28 years ago, Reedy's letter made its way to her Barre home. It arrived in a batch of mail sent from her publisher. Paterson, 81, estimates she gets hundreds of letters a year, many from students who are encouraged by their teachers to write.

(Paterson described a humorous note: "You're the best writer in the world," the

student wrote. "Sometime I'm going to read one of your books.")

#### A WRITER ON MY HANDS

Paterson was married for 51 years to John Paterson, a pastor who died in September. They raised four children together, and have seven grandchildren. After John Paterson's retirement in 1995 from the First Presbyterian Church in Barre, he took up the practice of reading Katherine Paterson's mail. Each year, he passed on to Katherine Paterson a handful of letters among the hundreds he read. John Paterson selected Reedy's letter and gave it to his wife.

"You just read it and weep," Katherine Paterson said. "And you think this poor, lonely kid out there, not knowing what was going to happen to him."

She was struck by another aspect of his letter: "By the time I finished that letter," Paterson said, "I knew I had a writer on my hands."

The two became pen pals, a friendship whose beginnings remain a source of happy amazement for Reedy.

"I didn't need to hear back," Reedy said. "I just wanted to thank her for letting me keep going. And I thought she should know that what she's doing is really important."

Yet he received a response in October, 2004. "She talked about how special it feels for a reader to appreciate this story she had written that seemed, at the time of her writing it, to be almost too personal to share," Reedy recalled.

The next month, on leave in Iowa, Reedy bought all the Katherine Paterson books he could find and brought them back to Afghanistan with him.

"I read those and loved them," he said. "There were some Afghans who were learning English, and I passed along the books to them and talked about how much I enjoyed her books."

What Reedy initially kept to himself in his correspondence with Paterson was that he aspired to be a writer. He decided to share this when it occurred to him he might not make it home alive. But he never sent her any writing (apart from the letters), mindful of imposing on her.

Reedy did seek Katherine Paterson's advice about graduate writing programs, and she recommended Vermont College of Fine Arts in Montpelier. Paterson is a trustee of the college, whose low-residency programs include children's and adult literature.

"I said 'impose,'" Paterson recalled. "Plenty of people impose on me that I don't like nearly as much as I like you."

Based on his letters, Paterson offered to write a letter of recommendation for Reedy. He accepted only after a letter he expected fell through, she said.

Reedy was accepted at Vermont College of Fine Arts, the only MFA program he applied to. It was there that he wrote the manuscript for his first novel, "Words in the Dust." The book, published by Arthur A. Levine Books, tells the story of an Afghan girl and her family. It concerns the girl's love for words; and her search for a connection to her dead mother, and for beauty in a place where it's not so easy to find that.

Reedy's story was inspired, in part, by a girl he met in Afghanistan. Like the character in the novel he would write, the child had a cleft lip. Soldiers in Reedy's unit pooled their money to pay the girl's transportation to a hospital, where a U.S. Army doctor performed surgery to repair her face.

"She faced this whole thing with this wonderful sort of quiet courage, this incredible dignity," Reedy recalled. "I promised her that I would do whatever I could to tell her story. She couldn't understand me, but that's what I told her. In the army, we have

to keep our promises, so you don't make many. I think if I hadn't made that promise, I wouldn't have been able to stick through to the end to write that book."

He was also encouraged by Katherine Paterson to continue writing the book. Her support came amid concerns about cross-cultural writing: a white man from Iowa writing a novel about a disfigured girl in war-torn Afghanistan.

"I asked her if this made any sense, and if she thought it was a good idea to write this," Reedy said. "And she said, 'Well, I think you should try.' And that was all the permission I needed."

Paterson, who was born in China, has written books set in Japan and China. The notion that a writer can't write about a foreign culture, its people and places, essentially says imagination is worthless, she said.

"Ideally, she could write her own story," Paterson said of Reedy's protagonist. "But she can't yet. And somebody needs to tell it for her. And I do believe in the power of imagination. Tolstoy can write about women very well, and he has never been one."

#### TO BE A WRITER

Reedy's book, with an introduction by Katherine Paterson, was published three years ago. He dedicated it to Paterson and his father.

"I loved the book," she said. "And if my name was going to call attention to it and my name was going to help promote it, I'd write an introduction."

In her introduction, Paterson wrote in part: "I am profoundly grateful for an introduction to a land and culture that are foreign to me through this beautiful and often heartbreaking tale of one strong and compassionate girl. She will live on in my heart and, I feel sure, the heart of every reader of this fine book."

Before his first trip to Vermont, Reedy wrote once more to Katherine Paterson. He said he'd be honored, should he be accepted to Vermont College, to buy her a cup of coffee. Sure, she said, but Paterson also had an idea: Why don't you come and stay at our house the night before your residency begins?

In July, 2006, Katherine Paterson "and Mr. Paterson," to use Reedy's words, picked him up at the airport in Burlington and drove him to their Barre home.

He was very nervous about meeting Katherine Paterson, Reedy said, expecting her to show up in an expensive car and drive him to her rich mansion. But he found that Paterson, "arguably the most successful middle-school author who is really around," drives a regular car and lives in a "normal house."

The MFA program at Vermont College "gave me my dream," Reedy said. Yet Katherine Paterson taught him what it means to be a writer.

"Nobody has taught me more about how to be the kind of writer I want to be than Katherine Paterson has," Reedy said. "No one has taught me more about how to live as a writer. She has, I think, modeled the need for humility and generosity."

Once, feeling he didn't belong at Vermont College of Fine Arts and that he was "hopelessly outclassed," Reedy conveyed this in a letter to Katherine Paterson. He wanted to steal lines from Emily Dickinson and walk around campus saying: "I'm nobody. Who are you?"

Paterson wrote back that she, too, is nobody. If she ever forgets that, she's in big trouble.

#### VERMONT COFFEE COMPANY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Vermont is known for its small and large businesses alike. Vermonters take pride in

buying locally, and as a result, businesses like the Vermont Coffee Company have been able to expand and become forces in their respective industries.

When Paul Ralston started the Vermont Coffee Company over 30 years ago in the small town of Middlebury, VT, he did so based on the belief that coffee creates community. Today, he continues his commitment to a high-quality farmer-friendly coffee blend by using only fair trade, certified organic coffee beans from around the world.

Paul's passion for coffee has created an opportunity for him to forge his own path to success, and he has expanded Vermont Coffee Company's distribution to retail outlets throughout the Northeast and along the Atlantic coast. His business continues to expand, and his success is just one hallmark of the respected Vermont Brand. I congratulate his success, and I ask that the text of an article appearing in the Burlington Free Press on February 20, 2014, about his success be printed in for the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Burlington Free Press, Feb. 20, 2014]

#### MIDDLEBURY COFFEE ROASTER STILL GROWING AFTER 30 YEARS

(By Melissa Pasanen)

MIDDLEBURY, VT.—Vermont Coffee Company in Middlebury was ahead of the curve when it started roasting organic, fair trade beans 30 years ago. Its continued success is based on a simple philosophy.

In the front hall of Vermont Coffee Company's offices and production facility, dozens of photos of happy people, some with coffee cups in hand, smile down from the wall.

In keeping with the company's longtime tagline—"Coffee roasted for friends"—these are not just customers, founder-owner Paul Ralston clarified on a recent tour: They are friends.

"Before there was Facebook," Ralston, 61, said, "We had our friends' wall."

Ralston has always been a little ahead of the curve, since his first foray into roasting coffee beans some 30 years ago as a tiny bakery-based operation.

There have also been plenty of curves in the road he has traveled since then, but this year Ralston expects Vermont Coffee Company to purchase half a million pounds of green coffee beans, which will be roasted in its recently doubled 15,000-square-foot facility and shipped to accounts ranging from a small, highly regarded group of New York City coffee shops to Costco.

#### COFFEE CULTURE

It was during his ownership of Bristol Bakery from 1977 to 1983 that Ralston first stumbled upon the smoky and aromatic process of coffee-roasting in Manhattan's Bowery neighborhood while shopping for used bakery equipment. The smells conjured up memories of the strong espresso his Italian grandmother carefully brewed every Sunday when he was a child.

When he came back to Bristol, Ralston serendipitously found a classic turn-of-the-20th-century roaster, installed it in the bakery's front window and began roasting batches of green coffee beans well before the trend of small, local coffee roasters swept the country.

After selling the bakery, Ralston returned to school at Burlington's Trinity College to study business administration and planned to pay some of his tuition bills by running a Church Street espresso cart. But Starbucks was just opening its first Seattle coffeehouse and most people didn't know what to make of his cart. "It was a huge flop," he said ruefully.

More than a decade went by, during which Ralston spent time in the San Francisco Bay area working in nonprofit arts management and appreciating the region's vibrant cafe culture before he and his wife, Deb Gwinn, returned to Vermont where he helped grow the cosmetics and skincare company Autumn Harp to \$6 million in annual sales. That led to a job with The Body Shop in England where, he noted, "There was a coffee drought, so I drank tea."

#### BROWN-BAGGING IT

In 1997, Ralston and Gwinn returned again to Vermont and to the antique Royal Roaster #4, which had been gathering dust in their Bristol garage. "I hooked it up in the garage and started roasting and taking the coffee to gatherings for feedback," Ralston said. As he developed his new business idea over the next few years, he kept things simple, both by design and by default.

Like back in the Bristol Bakery days, Vermont Coffee Company used brown paper lunch bags to package the coffee and a friend made a rubber stamp to label the bags. "The brown bag was the starting principal," Ralston said. "When you would get something fresh and from a local shop, there wouldn't be a lot of packaging."

"We started with just dark and decaf," he said. "What else do you need?" And the coffee was available only as whole bean. "We refuse to grind coffee. As soon as you grind it you start the staling process," Ralston explained.

Ralston's approach was also influenced strongly by his former boss, Body Shop founder, Anita Roddick, who he described as "a pioneer in trade, not aid," cultivating mutually beneficial trade relationships with developing countries and communities to help them become self-sufficient rather than simply providing financial or other aid. When he first told Roddick he was thinking of getting back into coffee, he recalled that she said to him, "Your coffee should be 100 percent organic and 100 percent fair trade." There wasn't a brand like that at the time, "and it turned out there was a good reason for that," Ralston said. "Everyone thought I was nuts. At the time, organic was just gnarly vegetables."

#### WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

Count Vermont coffee expert Dan Cox among those who thought Ralston was a little nuts. Cox had been the first full-time employee of what was then Green Mountain Coffee Roasters. He worked there for a dozen years before he founded his own Burlington-based coffee-testing business, Coffee Enterprises, which does analysis for many major national coffee companies. "Paul came to me and said, I want to learn everything about roasting," Cox recalled. "He told me he wanted to be like Peet's [a leading San Francisco Bay area coffee roaster], which is like the Guinness of coffee. I said, This isn't the Bay area. The East Coast is not into dark roast. Like with Guinness, for every customer you turn on, you'll turn four off."

In addition, Cox remembers Ralston outlining his "folksy" marketing plan with the brown bags and emphasis on selling to friends. "I said, That's a little far-fetched, pal." And he said, That's all I've got."

Ralston spent six months learning how to evaluate green coffee beans, blend, roast and control quality and despite Cox's initial con-

cerns, he carved out a niche and grew steadily. "He was still there in five years and then another five," Cox said. "He was very savvy, always asking for a better way to do something . . . and he has stayed true to his style. His packaging is still relatively unsophisticated but it works for him. He makes a respectable coffee and a pretty darn good decaf."

A few other factors worked in Ralston's favor, Cox added: "Number one, he had a passion for it, and number two, nobody really came right after him. He had a window of opportunity that doesn't exist today."

#### SOLID FOCUS

As Cox noted, the competitive frame is very different today with new micro-roasters popping up regularly, but Ralston has stayed focused on his initial vision.

Since its official launch in 2001, Vermont Coffee Company has expanded to retail outlets all over Vermont, as well as New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Hampshire with distribution growing at a healthy clip around the Northeast and down the Atlantic coast. The company has about 23 employees, about half of those full-time and many part-time by choice, older and partly retired or younger with children. "Part of our business model is a flexible workforce," Ralston explained.

Ralston, who is sole owner, would not share sales figures but Vermont Coffee Company projects 20 percent growth in 2014. The flagship line of retail packaged whole beans remains simple and straightforward in its descriptors: Dark, Medium, Mild and Decaf. The down-to-earth brown bag packaging remains, although it takes the form of a brown box for Costco.

With the exception of one line from the Dominican Republic, rather than emphasizing single-sourced coffees from specific regions like many other small roasters, Vermont Coffee Company has always led with its blends.

"We are blenders. There's nothing magical about our beans," said Ralston. "The goal is to keep our blends tasting the same, month to month, year to year."

Vermont Coffee Company buys certified organic beans following principles set by the International Fair Trade Federation, Ralston said. The annual coffee harvest occurs at different times in different climates and over a year beans could be sourced from Ethiopia, Indonesia, Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala and Nicaragua, among other countries.

The beans are stacked high in burlap bags in a large storage room in Middlebury all tagged with their country, producer, and lot number. As he demonstrated how the beans are pulled for evaluation through a long hollow spiked tool that can dig deep into each bag, Ralston explained how different beans contribute to the overall blend. Coffee from Guatemala, for example, he said, "We call them our spice beans. They add fruity and floral notes."

The company's modest marketing budget still emphasizes grassroots relationship-building (now via social media), coffee sampling and offering loyal customers Vermont Coffee Company merchandise such as t-shirts and mugs for returning proof-of-purchases, which they do by weaving strips of brown bags into quilts, folding them into origami and even, in one case, using them to craft a collage of Johnny Cash drinking coffee? black, of course.

Another thing that has not changed, Ralston noted with a smile: "We always smell like coffee. When we go to the bank, they know who we are . . . It's a sensory business. We're in it for what it smells and tastes like."

#### SLOW ROAST, SLOW GROWTH

Changes have come gradually, many in the form of process improvements such as the

adoption of the Japanese production scheduling system, Kanban; new pieces of equipment to mechanize jobs previously done by hand like bag-folding; and increased roasting capacity.

In the roasting room recently, a brand new, shiny stainless steel roaster with capacity of 150 pounds was in the process of being installed. It cost about \$350,000 to purchase and install and would double Vermont Coffee Company's roasting capacity, Ralston said.

"The thing that makes it big, bold coffee is how we roast it," Ralston explained, pausing in front of one of the company's two smaller roasters where a small circular window gave a peek into the pre-roasted, dull grey-green beans while the glossy dark brown, roasted beans swirled below. Vermont Coffee Company roasts its beans about twice as long as many other larger roasters, Ralston said. He believes the longer, slower roast is key to building rounded flavors, similar to slowly caramelized onions or the depth of a long-cooked Cajun or Creole roux sauce base. "It's a long, slow caramelizing roast," he said, "which results in coffee with more body and sweeter, chocolate, caramel notes and a smoky tang and lower acidity."

With a similar careful approach, Ralston has planned and budgeted for growth. Over his varied career, Ralston said, "I've made all the mistakes you can make." He has seen firsthand, he said, that "growth offers new ways to screw up."

"We follow a model called bootstrapping," he said. "We use yesterday's cash flow to finance growth. We're not extravagant." The company's credit line, he said, usually has a zero balance. An additional challenge these past four years has been Ralston's commitment to the Vermont legislature to which he was elected in November of 2010. He ran, he said, because "I think there is a need for more people with active business experience in the legislature."

He feels good about what he has accomplished there, he said, but it's been "very hard" balancing the four-month, four-day-a-week commitment with running an actively growing business. "I think we would be further ahead if I hadn't done it," he said.

Looking ahead 15 years, Ralston said with a smile, "I hope to still be grooving on coffee." He also hopes to be able to spend more time "at origin," in countries where coffee is grown. "It happens to be warmer than here," he added.

At home in Vermont, Ralston imagines a slightly bigger office "with a wood-burning stove, a couch and a bigger coffee table where friends will come by to visit and sit to have a coffee."

#### TRIBUTE TO BOB KLEIN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to recognize the more than three decades of contributions by Bob Klein, one of the greatest conservationists in Vermont history, on the occasion of his retirement after 35 years as State Director of the Vermont Nature Conservancy.

Bob Klein is the founding Director of the Vermont Nature Conservancy, and under his guidance, its mission has been to protect Vermont's unique and rare landscapes, important wildlife habitat and biodiversity. Parcels are selected for their natural attributes, not necessarily for size, and in total, the Vermont Nature Conservancy has helped to conserve an incredible 188,000 acres during Bob's tenure. I followed his example, and one of my priorities

through my work in the Senate has been to add approximately 200,000 acres to the Green Mountain National Forest. Bob has accomplished this scale of conservation within the framework of a relatively small private organization.

The Vermont Nature Conservancy has transferred most of the conserved land to the State and other land managers, while retaining ownership of the gems, to ensure their careful stewardship. These parcels included 55 natural areas dispersed across the State and open to visitors and naturalists. Bob has guided the Nature Conservancy in protecting forever iconic Vermont landscapes such as Camel's Hump, Hunger Mountain, Shelburne Pond, Alburgh Dunes, the Maidstone Bends of the Connecticut River and the Green River Reservoir.

Bob's contributions to conservation go well beyond lands that the Nature Conservancy has purchased. His leadership within the State was instrumental in the 132,000 acre Champion Lands conservation project when he helped bring together the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Vermont legislature and multiple private partners. At the Nature Conservancy, Bob has carefully assembled a team of conservation biologists, geographers and naturalists whose work has transformed conservation thought and practice. Vermont State agencies, recreational trails organizations, Federal agencies and private developers look first to the Nature Conservancy when seeking a better understanding of Vermont's ecosystems and how to protect them.

Other Nature Conservancy Chapters across the United States have been modeled on the Vermont office that Bob created. Bob's patient, generous and kind work with members and the general public is reflected in the fact that the Vermont has, by far, the highest per-capita Nature Conservancy membership of any State. I have often looked to Bob for advice on national conservation policy and he has led national Nature Conservancy visits to Washington, D.C.

Bob is retiring as the State Director of the Vermont Nature Conservancy but I know that he will continue to pursue his passions of botany, photography and exploration of nature. Bob's photographs have graced national publications and gallery walls. I will continue to look to Bob as an advisor on conservation policy and wish him all the best as he begins this new chapter.

#### TRIBUTE TO AUGUST SCHAEFER

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on February 28, 2014, August Schaefer, better known as Gus, stepped down from his post as chief safety officer of Underwriters Laboratories, after dedicating 41 years to the company.

Underwriters Laboratories is an independent safety certification organization that tests products, conducts factory inspections, and writes standards for safety. Gus has served in many

leadership roles during his time at UL, but in all capacities he has been dedicated to promoting public safety.

Under his leadership, UL launched the Firefighter Safety Research Institute which works to provide first responders and firefighters with additional information on burning buildings and the behavior of specific materials in fires.

In 2012, Mr. Schaefer shared his expertise on the safety and effectiveness of flame retardant chemicals as he testified before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government. His testimony on the effectiveness of flame retardant chemicals and furniture flammability standards was a significant contribution to the hearing.

Mr. Schaefer also worked to have UL, as part of a partnership with Disney, bring safety education campaigns to children all over the world through the Safety Smart Ambassador Program. The program's video campaign educates children on fire safety, personal safety, water safety, health, environmental protection, and online safety.

UL, under his guidance, expanded its operations overseas. In response to a growing number of imports, UL has increased its presence in Asia, where it tests products intended for consumers in the United States. UL also has expanded its safety outreach to India, establishing an annual Road Safety Council where fire officials work to solve challenges in a developing nation.

Mr. Schaefer's service in Illinois is felt well beyond product safety and testing. Under his leadership, UL established annual Living the Mission Celebrations, which encourage UL staff to spend a day volunteering in the community.

Gus Schaefer's leadership at UL has made the world a better—and safer—place. When we use products approved by Underwriters Labs, we thank Gus Schaefer. I thank him for his many years of service and wish him the best in his retirement.

#### NATIONAL YOUTH SYNTHETIC DRUG AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am pleased to join Senator KLOBUCHAR in cosponsoring a resolution designating the week of March 9, 2014, as National Youth Synthetic Drug Awareness Week. The abuse of synthetic drugs has grown rapidly in a very short amount of time. Calls into poison control centers concerning synthetic marijuana, also known as "K2," doubled between 2010 and 2011 and remained elevated throughout 2012. Emergency room visits connected to synthetic marijuana use more than doubled, to 28,000 visits, from 2010 to 2011. In addition, other synthetic drugs commonly known as "bath salts" produced over 22,000 emergency room admissions.

The serious symptoms associated with synthetic drug use range from